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SUBJECT: TOGO: CAR PARTY HOLDS CONGRESS, DISCUSSES FUTURE PLANS

REF: LOME 280

¶1. The third largest political party in Togo, the Action Committee for Renewal, held its party congress October 17-18. There were several unexpected surprises, including the presence of the Union of the Forces of Change (UFC) opposition leader Gilchrist Olympio and the election of a new president of the CAR. The party presented a document with its basic platform, the party further clarified several points when the entire newly elected leadership called on the Ambassador in November. While the CAR has made several high profile changes in recent months, it continues its repetition of the same basic statements, making it questionable as to whether the party has any influence in Togo anymore. End Summary.

¶2. The congress, only the second in the CAR's history, was held at the fairgrounds near the airport, and was decorated with festive red decorations. A large numbers of CAR party members were in attendance, and the opening ceremony had a definite party feeling. High-level representatives from all the major parties in Togo attended, the most surprising being UFC president Olympio, who splits his time between Paris and Accra. The theme of the congress was "Mobilization for an Alternative in 2010." In addition to the then-president of the CAR, Yaovi Agboyibo, Olympio and Rally of the Togolese People (RPT) representative Agbo spoke at the opening ceremony.

¶3. The most unexpected change during the congress was the election of a new president. Agboyibo has been the leader of the CAR since the early 1990s, when the party was founded. The reputation of the party is unquestionably linked to him. Agboyibo is now an honorary president, and Mr. Dodji Apevon is the president. The party also decided to wait to choose a presidential candidate for the 2010 elections, but announced that another meeting will be held within 6 months to decide on the candidate.

¶4. The CAR issued a general declaration concerning the political situation in Togo. The party claims that the crisis in Togo today is essentially political in nature, and the government is implementing its own policies instead of following the decisions put in place by the government of national unity, as was foreseen. The declaration calls for a general reinforcement of democracy, decentralization, and the further implementation of the Global Political Agreement (GPA) of 2006 (Agboyibo played a leading role in the formulation of that agreement). In a subsequent conversation with the Ambassador, CAR leadership discussed the need to stop thinking about the past, yet still discussed at length the need to continue implementation of the GPA provisions. In the same conversation, the members described the fear people already have of the 2010 presidential elections and stated that the international community should get involved.

¶5. The declaration also addressed the economy, social affairs, sports and culture, and international politics. The CAR party is concerned with specific aspects of the economy, namely infrastructure, the energy crisis, corruption at all levels of society, and inefficient parastatals. The declaration repeats the party's position that the problems

stem from politics, and the high budgetary deficit, balance of payments problems, and the unemployment rate are all unacceptable. The social problems are mainly located within the education, sanitation, and security sectors.

16. Comment. The change in party leadership seems to be a move to guarantee the continued existence of the party in the absence of Agboyibo, although he will more than likely be the presidential candidate for 2010. The party keeps stating that it wants to move into the future towards a better democracy, yet it refuses to participate in any process that did not stem directly from the GPA or Agboyibo's time as prime minister. The arrival of Olympio at the congress was significant, as he and Agboyibo have purportedly been at odds recently, but Agboyibo's desire to unite behind a (CAR) presidential candidate will not be realized, as Olympio is already his party's candidate. With only 4 seats in the National Assembly, the party needs to find a way to distinguish itself if it wishes to continue to be a player in Togolese politics. End Comment.

HAWKINS